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THE EARLY FRENCH MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

By J. G. ROSENGARTEN.

(*Read April 18, 1907.*)

In 1768 Buffon was elected, the first Frenchman to become a member of this Society, and thus the first of a long list of his countrymen chosen for this honorable distinction. In the same year Du Simitiere was elected, still remembered as a local antiquarian, and he brought some French spirit into this Society,—he was diligent in his attendance and active in adding to its collections. In those colonial days naturally the ties with the mother country were very close, and in the same year General Gage and Sir Wm. Johnson were elected. Buffon, Linnæus, elected in 1769, and Benjamin West were presented with the Society's publications. In 1772, Le Roy of the Academy of Sciences in Paris was elected. In 1775 Franklin, President in the chair, presented books by several French authors, Decquemare, Dennis, Rozier, Condorcet, Daubenton, Dubourg, Le Roux, Raynal, Lavoisier, and they were elected. "The calamities of war" interrupted the meetings and they were not resumed until the British had evacuated Philadelphia.

After the meetings were resumed, Gérard de Raynevål, the first French Minister sent here was elected, and a bound volume of the *Transactions* was presented to him, and received with expression of his intention to forward the interests of the Society in France. He attended the meetings and agreed to forward thanks to Buffon for the gift of his works. The example thus set was followed by the election of his successors, Ternant, Luzerne, Adet, Otto, Genet, Fauchet, and in later years of Hyde de Neuville and Poussin—all French Ministers here. In 1781 La Fayette and his companion in arms Chastellux were elected, and Barbé de Marbois, the French Consul in Philadelphia, whose death the Society mourned in 1837,—in his ninety-fifth year. In 1784 Vergennes, and in 1785 Guichen,

Lieutenant General of the French ‘Naval Armies,’ were elected. Later Cabanis, Cadet de Vaux, Le Veillard, friends of Franklin during his long stay in Paris, were elected, and St. Jean de Crevecoeur, long a resident in this country,—his books made it known abroad, and have recently been republished for their interest and value.

In 1789 Brissot de Warville was elected,—he had travelled in this country and urged French colonies in its western lands,—later he came here as a refugee from the French Revolution, but returned to France and was guillotined. Moreau de St. Mery, a refugee from the French West Indies, was elected in acknowledgment of his contributions to the Society’s *Transactions*,—he settled here, opened a book store, was a frequent attendant at the meetings and helped to secure exchanges with French scientific societies.

In 1796 Lerebours and Talleyrand, and in 1800 Dupont de Nemours, and in 1799, Volney—all exiles from France—were elected. Later Lesseps, Consul of France in Philadelphia, and father of the builder of the Suez Canal, was elected, and in 1823 Joseph Bonaparte, and in 1824 his nephew Charles, both exiles after the fall of Napoleon, and long residents here, were elected, with other Napoleonic exiles, Real, Miot de Melito, and in 1829, Hyde de Neuville, the Bourbon minister here.

After the alliance with France, the Society voted that “ten pounds of the best kind of raw silk produced in Pennsylvania be sent to Lyons, there to be wrought in the most elegant manner, and presented to her most Christian Majesty as a mark of very high respect.” In 1783 Jefferson moved and Reed seconded and it was ordered that Rittenhouse should make an orrery to be presented to his most Christian Majesty. In 1784 La Fayette, by special appointment, entertained the members with an account of the invisible power called animal magnetism, lately discovered by Mesmer, and soon after Marbois presented the report of the Commissioners appointed by the King of France to investigate the subject.

In 1781 Rochefoucault, Charles, lecturer in experimental philosophy and aeronaut, and in 1791 Du Ponceau, aid to Steuben, and in 1796 Rochefoucault de Liancourt, known by his sympathetic volumes on his travels in this country, were elected. In 1797 Volney

was elected; he returned to France and became a member of the Institute, his book of travels was not nearly so kindly in its tone, and he spoke harshly of his countryman Brissot de Warville for advising Frenchmen to come here. Barbé de Marbois on his return to France was employed in the Foreign office and was an active agent in the sale of Louisiana,—his ‘Memoir’ was credited with securing Napoleon’s approval of the treaty that ceded that vast region to the United States.

In 1789 Quesnay de Beauregard, who had served in the Revolutionary war, presented his elaborate Plan of the Academy of Sciences and Belles Lettres, established by him in Richmond, Va.; it was a very broad scheme for a sort of exchange bureau and clearing house of scientific and literary intelligence between the United States and France and other European countries,—the French Revolution put an end to it;—he was a grandson of Quesnay, one of the leaders of the French economists,—his son wrote on the Constitutions of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, and his grandson was the prosecuting attorney against Boulanger.

Le Gaux was elected in 1789, no doubt in recognition of his efforts to establish vineyards at Spring Mills, near Philadelphia.—Du Ponceau, who was elected in 1791, began life as a student for the priesthood, but came here at the suggestion of Beaumarchais, as secretary and interpreter for Steuben,—he became a member and later a leader of the Philadelphia Bar, president as well as a frequent contributor to the proceedings of the Philosophical Society, and was elected a member of the French Institute in recognition of his writings on Indian languages, etc.

Many of the French exiles found, as Pontgibaud, one of them, said, an ark of safety in Philadelphia, and most of those then or later famous, were elected; at one time so many attended that they addressed the society in French, and here at least there were representatives of all the conflicting elements of French politics, Royalists, Girondists, republicans of every opinion, and they met apparently in great harmony in these peaceful halls, discussing scientific questions. Dupont de Nemours had filled many important positions in France, had helped Vergennes negotiate the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain, was a leader among the economists of France,

and president of the French Constituent Assembly, and while his sons established in this country the business still carried on by their descendants, several of them became members too,—he returned to France and filled important posts. He wrote at the suggestion of Jefferson, an essay on Education in the United States, in which he presented a plan for primary, secondary and higher schools, colleges and universities.

With the nineteenth century began the election of many leaders of science in France,—Roume, Delambre, Destutt de Tracy, Lasteyrie, Michaux, Vauquelin, Deleuze, Pougens, Remusat. Money was subscribed by the Society toward the expenses of Michaux's western explorations, and later for a statue of Cuvier in Paris. Wm. Maclure, formerly a merchant of Philadelphia, after a long residence abroad, returned, bringing with him a corps of naturalists, to help him in a plan for a geological survey of the United States,—one of them, Le Sueur was elected a member in 1817; trained in the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, he contributed many papers to the scientific societies abroad and here,—joined Maclure in founding the Academy of Natural Sciences and was active in both bodies. Later he went with Maclure to New Harmony, Indiana, and continued his scientific studies in the then far west, and returning to Philadelphia, taught drawing, was a frequent attendant at the meetings of this Society, and at last returned to France, to take charge of the Natural History Museum of Havre, where he died in 1846.

In 1803 the National Institute of France promised, as successors of the French Academy of Sciences, to resume correspondence and exchanges, established by Franklin during his long stay in Paris. Franklin left by will of this Society, 91 volumes of the History and Transactions of the Royal Academy of Sciences of France, and after his death, it bought from his library many French scientific books, and by Hassler's aid, completed many of the serial publications of French scientific societies, which now form an important part of its large and growing collection of works of that kind.

At a later time at a meeting at which Joseph and Charles Bonaparte attended, they and Le Sueur and Du Ponceau spoke of the earlier days of frequent attendance of French members and visi-

tors. It was here that Talleyrand collected material for the papers he read after his return to France, before the Institut, in which he spoke in flattering terms of his stay in this country,—mentioning his asking a chance acquaintance, Benedict Arnold, not knowing him, for letters of introduction, and Arnold's reply that he was the only American who could not help him with his countrymen. Hyde de Neuville, a royalist exile, lived here for some years, after the restoration of the Bourbons returned to France, filled some important posts, then came back as French Minister,—was kept busy watching the Napoleonic exiles, some of them alarming him by their military colony in Texas, and wild schemes for a French Empire in Mexico, with a Bonaparte to reign over it;—he politely returned to Joseph Bonaparte a portrait of Napoleon found at the French Legation in Washington,—returned to France, was Minister of Foreign Affairs under Louis Philippe, and left an Autobiography full of incidents of his life here.

Later King Louis Philippe, A. Julien, Stanislas Jullien, Larrey, Roux de Rochelles, Guizot, de Tocqueville, Poussin, French Minister to the United States, Leverrier, Pouchet, Michel Chevalier, Brown Sequard, Elie de Beaumont, Milne Edwards, St. Claire Deville, J. B. Dumas, Verneuil, Claude Bernard, Lesquereux, Renan, Boucher des Perthes, Gasparin, Mariette, Carlier, Leon Say, Broca, Viollet le Duc, Claude Jannet, Paul Leroy Beaulieu, Rosny, Pasteur, Levasseur, Duruy, Nadillac, Taine, Berthelot, George Bertin, Maspero, Poincaré, Becquerel, Darboux, were among the representative Frenchmen of science and letters elected to membership in this Society, thus perpetuating the long roll of French members which began with Buffon. This goodly custom will no doubt long continue as a proof that the alliance of France and the United States, to which this country was so largely indebted for its independence, will be perpetuated by inviting to membership in this Society the leaders of French intelligence in every field of research.

In the collection of this Society there is manuscript by Mr. Samuel Breck, a member from 1838 until his death in 1862, in his ninety-first year, in which he gives his recollections of some of the early French exiles, members of this Society. He speaks of these too, in the volume of his "Recollections," published in Philadelphia

in 1877. He mentions the fact that Talleyrand, like others of his fellow exiles, notably Volney, took the oath of allegiance to the State of Pennsylvania. Talleyrand speculated in land and stocks, and made money, thanks to the help of William Bingham, then the richest man in this country. It is characteristic that although Talleyrand brought a letter from Lafayette to Washington, the President declined to receive him until he was about to return to France, to begin that diplomatic career which made him so conspicuous in European affairs for many years.

Mr. Breck also speaks sharply of Volney, who earned his living here by teaching, and his unfavorable opinion is confirmed by the contemporary report of an English visitor, Thomas Twining, who thought that Volney's temper was soured by his loss of power in France,—on his return he attained a position of importance and yet in his "Travels," said little that was kind of the country that had given him a safe refuge. This too was true of Brissot de Warville in his "Travels,"—but he, poor fellow, went back to France too soon, and ended his life under the guillotine.

Mr. Breck says that Rochefoucauld and the Orleans princes took their enforced exile very good naturedly. Chastellux, who had served under Rochambeau, as well as his comrade, Lauzun, and a later exile of a very different type, Brillat de Savarin, better known by his book on cooking than by his more serious work as a judge, all said kind things of the country and people who gave them shelter in their distress. Many of the French travellers who have visited and written about this country, were members of the Philosophical Society, and from its large and valuable library, drew much information for their writings.

The publication of the writings of Franklin, edited with fidelity by Professor Albert H. Smyth, one of our members, enables us to see in Franklin's vast collection of his papers preserved here, how largely he influenced and was in turn influenced by his French associates. Many of his friends in Paris were scientific men of great distinction and leaders of public opinion there and many of them became contributors by papers, gifts of pamphlets and books to this Society, and no doubt at his suggestion, were elected members, and thus became interested in its work. The example then of our

great founder and of the many notable Frenchmen elected members from his day on, may well inspire this Society to continue and increase its activity by electing other Frenchmen sharing in its task of promoting useful knowledge.

Note: At the General Meeting of the Society held April 20th, 1907, M. J. J. Jusserand, French Ambassador at Washington, and author of many valuable works, was elected a foreign member of the American Philosophical Society.